

Dear Senators and Representatives

My name is Nicole LeBlanc. I live in Silver Spring MD. I writing today to talk about the need to eliminate the all of nothing benefit cliffs in the SSDI program. Over the last year I completed 2 part time fellowships in addition to my PT job at the state of MD Developmental Disabilities Administration where I only make 15.83 an hour. Which of course is not a livable wage or enough to be self sufficient living in the Southern Region of Maryland. At the end of September 2018 I discovered that my benefits were being cut off without warning for the month of Oct because they say I made 2000 in the month of April and work incentives were not considered. Also as a Self Advocacy Resources and Technical Assistance (SARTAC) fellow at NDRN I got stipends totaling 5,000 over the course of 11 months. In addition I also completed a 6 month fellowship at the Autism Society of America where I was paid minimum wage for Montgomery country at 11.50 an hour and as of 7/1/18 12.00 an hour. Going back and trying to make the case I didn't go over SGA and that work incentives like subsidies should be considered. Or try and make the case that this fellowship where I got a stipend should be considered more of a learning experience than a work experience since I am not an employee of NDRN. As a result of this chaos for the month of October for instance I had to get NDRN to adjust their payment schedule and cut a check of 1,000 so that I could pay my rent. Recently I applied for expedited reinstatement now that my fellowship is coming to an end. This process of trying to make the case I didn't go over SGA and get my benefits has taken 6 months to untangle. It has caused great stress and anxiety. I say this given that I filed my taxes recently found out I owe 2 grand and on top of that I also just found out I need 5K worth in dental work. Maryland Does Not cover dental for adults in medicaid. I hope my story provides Congress and the administration a way to look at eliminating work disincentives and benefits cliffs that keep people with disabilities trapped in the cycle of poverty never being able to get ahead in life.

My ideas for how we can fix the system so people like me don't have to experience chaos likes this is to do the following:

- 1 Raise the SGA so that those who are Not blind have the same limit.
- 2 Make the SGA limit be based on cost of living of a particular region instead of say 1180 for everyone regardless of whether you live in the cheap rural state or the suburbs of a major city like DC. SGA for DC area

should be 2800 given how expensive it is to live here unlike the deep south lets say where it is less costly.

3 Move to a 5 for 1 benefit offset

4 Eliminate all earnings caps in government benefit programs for people with disabilities.

5 Allow deductibility of Uber and Lyft as an IRWE instead of just allowing metro access especially for those of us who don't drive and need to travel to get to clients.

6 Allow for deductions for things that are Not covered by medicaid like Dental Care. In MD there is NO adult dental care for medicaid.

I hope you will consider my ideas and using my story when debating and drafting legislation on eliminating barriers to employment and other work disincentives that prevent adults with disabilities from achieving the American dream, or joining the middle class. I am always available to testify if you need me too. I can be reached at nleblanc677@gmail.com or 802-505-0253

Sincerely

Nicole LeBlanc

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